THE AFRICAN WIDOW.

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

THE

AFRICAN WIDOW.

Supposed to have been written by the late

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INTRODUCTION.

On lately reading the Report of a Society instituted for the relief of the wants of the poor Africans and Asiatic strangers, whom various circumstances in Providence have brought to England, I was much struck with the very affecting narrative of a black woman which is added to the Report. It occurred to me that it might be well to state the circumstances of her life in a few and simple rhymes. The attempt is here made, preserving the particulars of the history as they are recorded in the account above mentioned. L. R.

THE

AFRICAN WIDOW.

PART I.

Christians, attend, while I relate
A new and simple story,
'Twill teach your hearts with thankfulness
To praise the Lord of glory.

In London city once there dwelt
A poor but honest pair:
God bless'd them with an infant child,
And she was all their care.

From Africa's far distant shores
To this good land they came,
Friendless and poor, alike unknown
To fortune and to fame.

The times grew hard, and keen distress
Forced him from her to flee;

Mutual support in hopes to gain,
The husband went to sea.

Oft would the tender wife, with tears,
Her absent husband mourn;
Oft, as she view'd their darling child,
She sigh'd for his return.

But oh! my heart it bleeds to think
What sorrows did betide;
The parent's hope, this much-lov'd child,
It sicken'd, droop'd, and died.

And while she mourn'd her infant's loss,
Sad tidings came from sea;
(The ship was lost, her husband drown'd,)
A helpless widow she.

What tongue can tell, what heart conceive
The horrors of her mind!
Her husband lost, her infant dead,
And she was left behind!

Loudly she wept, and sigh'd, and groan'd
With anguish almost wild;
And still she cried, "My husband's dead,
"And I have lost my child!"

Was there no holy hope divine
To calm her anxious care?
No consolation from above,
No remedy in prayer?

Ah no! her dark, untutor'd mind
A stranger was to truth;
No God, no Christ, no hope she knew,
A heathen from her youth.

Deepest despair possess'd her soul,
She spake in accents wild,
And still she cried, "My husband's dead,
"And I have lost my child!"

Oft to the infant's grave she went
Full many a tear to shed,
And as she wept, still ever cried,
"Ah me! my child is dead!"

Each following week, when Sabbath bells
Proclaimed the hour of prayer,
The open'd church-yard gate soon brought
The weeping mother there.

Full three long years in hopeless wo
She mourn'd her wretched lot;

Comfort, like Rachel, she refus'd,
Because her child was not.

How dark the sorrows of a mind
With grief like this perplexed!
In this world she no comfort knew,
She sought none in the next.

A moment pause, while thus I end
The first part of my story,
And when you hear what's yet to come,
Oh give to God the glory!

PART II.

Christians, I'll tell you how the Lord
Pity'd this widow's sorrow;
For oft the tear that's shed to-night,
Ends in a smile to-morrow.

From week to week, for three long years,
With solemn pace and slow,
The widow trod the church-yard path
In unavailing wo.

Once, as she went her custom'd way,
Clos'd was the church-yard gate;
Far from the grave was she compell'd
In pensive grief to wait.

With streaming eyes she view'd the spot
Where her dear babe was laid,
Denied access, she sat and cried,
"Ah me! my child is dead!"

Within the adjoining house of God
Was heard the voice of prayer;
But all was vain to her who knew
No voice to soothe her care.

Once more she came, the gate was clos'd,
And she stood weeping there;
The only pathway which remain'd
Lay through the house of prayer

She saw the attendant at the door,
And ask'd her leave to pass;
"Pray, let me go to yonder grave,
My child's beneath the grass."

Thankful to gain her kind consent,
Swift through the church she fled,

And reach'd the grave, where still she cried
"Ah me! my child is dead!"

While in the church rejoicing saints
Songs of thanksgiving shout,
Low on the ground, in sad despair,
The widow sat without.

The hour of mercy then approach'd,
And God beheld her ease,
The preacher now began t' unfold
The mysteries of grace.

She linger'd long, but ere he clos'd
She rose to journey home;
Repassing through the church, she heard,
"Flee from the wrath to come"

Struck with the alarming sound, she stopp'd
Astonish'd and distress'd;
The preacher cried, "Arise, depart,
"For this is not your rest."

Deep in her heart conviction sunk,
Each word, each thought seemed new;
She long'd to ask, "Can I be saved?
"What must a sinner do?"

O'erwhelmed with many a rising fear,
  She felt the weight of sin;
She wish'd to seek salvation's path,
  But where must she begin?

Convinc'd how far from God she lived,
  Homeward she bent her way;
With thoughts confus'd, and falt'ring tongue
  Trembling, she tried to pray.

For mercy now she hourly sued,
  Dropping repentant tears;
The thoughts of judgment, death, and sin,
  Appall'd her soul with fears.

Earnest she read the word of God,
  But could not find relief,
As yet a veil was o'er her eyes,
  And she a prey to grief.

A neighbor told her, whom she ask'd
  What course she must pursue,
"A worthy lady lives hard by.
  "Who'll kindly speak to you.

"She is a lady rich and great,
"But she's a christian true;
"She lives a life of doing good,
"And she'll be good to you."

Gladly she hasten'd to the house
Where this kind lady dwelt;
To her she open'd all her heart,
And all she fear'd and felt.

With sweet affection and regard
The lady heard her woes,
Then kindly pointed out the way
For souls to seek repose.

She spoke of sin, and spoke of Christ,
His righteousness and blood;
Show'd how the sinner's only hope
In Jesus' sufferings stood.

"Fear not," said she, "but humbly come
"With this, thy only plea,
"A helpless sinner sure am I
"But Jesus died for me.

"Be ev'ry trial sent of God,
"A med'cine to thy mind;
"Thy husband and thy infant's loss
"Were both in love design'd.

"These were thy idols, these engross'd
"Thy soul's entirest eare;
"He took them both that thou might learn
"To seek thy God by prayer.

"That grave where thou so oft hast heav'd
"The sigh of sad despair,
"A place of mercy proved to thee,
"A Savior found thee there.

"Freely resign thine all to him,
"Whose truth shall make thee free;

"Believe it and be comforted,
"He gave himself for thee."

Thus holy counsel from her lips
In tender accents fell;
Parting, she took her hand, and said,
"Sister in Christ, farewell."

"Sister!"—she scarce believed the sound;
"Sister!" can this be true?
Can such a lady own a wretch,
And call her "sister" too?

The word it pierced her inmost soul,
The tear responsive fell;
What were the feelings of her heart,
No mortal tongue can tell.

She thought how lovely grace appears
In those whom God makes his;
What then must be the love of Christ
Which brings forth fruit like this?

Home she return'd, and prostrate fell
At the Redeemer's feet,
Pleaded his blood, his life, his death,
Before the mercy-seat.

Light, like a flood, burst o'er her soul,
As Jesus seem'd to say,
" I've blotted thy transgressions out,
" I've wash'd thy sins away."

Thus did the holy Comforter
His peaceful joys impart,
And poured the oil of gladness out
To heal her wounded heart.

" Bless'd be my Savior God," she cried,
" All glory be to thee;
" I know that 'tis in faithfulness
" Thou hast afflicted me.

" Dark was my day of ignorance,
" And dark of sin my night,
" But now the shade of death is turn'd
" To morning's welcome light.

" Incline my soul to serve thee, Lord,
" My every power employ,
" For thou hast heal'd the widow's heart,
" And made it sing for joy.

" Farewell, my babe; no more I'll weep,
" Nor at thy grave despair,

"But trust that God hath made my child
"His own eternal care.

"That house of God, where oft I'll go,
"Shall still this thought afford,
"I went to mourn an infant dead,
'But found a living Lord."

Christians, adieu! I now have told
My new and simple story;
Ascribe the honor all to God,
And praise the Lord of Glory.

BOOK

FOR

CHILDREN,

In English, French, German,

ILLUSTRATED

WITH NUMEROUS CUTS.

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